

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MASERU 00293 011516Z
ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-05 NSC-05
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FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
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INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY MBABANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MASERU 0293

LIMDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR NORLAND

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, LT
SUBJECT: LESOTHO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

REF: A. STATE 20549, B. MASERU 0216,

1. APPRECIATE REFTEL A REPORT ON STATUS OF LESOTHO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

2. IT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED THAT THE GOL'S INQUIRY CAN BE ATTRIBUTED DIRECTLY TO AAI/VP FRANK FERRARI WHO SAID QUITE FRANKLY THAT ONE OF OBJECTIVES OF HIS VISIT HERE JAN. 22-25 WAS TO REPRESENT THE KEEN INTEREST OF CONGRESSMAN SILVIO CONTE IN THE AIRPORT PROJECT. IT IS CLEAR THAT HE DID SO IN A WAY THAT AROUSED EXPECTATIONS OF U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROJECT -- AS EVIDENCED BY GOL ACTION IN CALLING ME IN TO DISCUSS THIS AS SOON AS I ARRIVED IN MASERU.

3. IT IS IRONIC THAT AID (THROUGH GRANT TO AAI) HAS HELPED TO MAKE POSSIBLE FERRARI'S MISSION WHICH ENERGIZED GOL INQUIRIES.
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4. PRIMIN JONATHAN ALSO ASKED WHEN "FIRM" U.S. RESPONSE MIGHT BE RECIEVED ON U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO AIRPORT PROJECT. I REPLIED THAT SINCE THE PROJECT ITSELF WAS NOT YET CLEARLY DEFINED (E.G. ENGINEERING/DESIGN STUDY IS ONLY ABOUT TO BE STARTED - REF A) IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THE U.S. TO MAKE A DEFINITIVE STATEMENT AT THIS TIME WITH RESPECT TO POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION.

WHEN I INFERRED THAT ARAB FUNDING FOR AIRPORT APPEARED TO BE ASSURED, PRIMIN SAID GOL INDEED HAS COMMITMENTS FROM SOME ARAB COUNTRIES BUT FROM OTHERS IT HAS NONE. FURTHER, HE SAID, EVEN WITH COMMITMENTS FROM ALL THE ARAB SOURCES INVOLVED, GOL WILL COME TO U.S. FOR ASSISTANCE IN COMPLETING PROJECT. WE WERE "ON NOTICE", HE CONCLUDED.

5. COMMENT: DEPARTMENT/AID MUST ACCEPT THAT POSSIBILITY OF A U.S.-FUNDED TRAINING COMPONENT IN THE AIRPORT PROJECT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED WITH GOL OFFICIALS HERE AND IN WASHINGTON FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AND THERE IS NO RPT NO WAY TO ERASE THAT RECORD NOW.
STOKES

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